

THE NEW SYRIAN SITUATION

I. A confused situation

A. Shishakli four-year dictatorship

replaced by temporary civilian government currently supported by army.

B. Octogenarian, President Hashem al Atassi; has been labeled senile, willing tool of extremist rebels and pro-Iraqi; coalition cabinet; army in background.

1. Prime Minister Asali, one of five Nationalists, four Populists and three Independents.

a. Nationalists are remains independence movement against French prior 1945.

b. Some Populists favor union with Iraq.

2. Defense Minister Dawalibi,

opportunistic, leftist, anti-Western, pan-Islamist support of Mufti,

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3. Foreign Affairs Minister Faydi

Atassi, experienced pro-Western
nephew of president.

4. Army leaders not unified; none
dominant.

II. Anticipated developments

A. Efforts restore 1951 constitutional
situation will meet difficulties.

Elections promised in two months.

1. Politicians divided; none popular;
poor party organization. Exiled

leaders Quwatli and Mardam have
Saudi financing and may return.

2. Bitter quarrels over union with
Iraq. Prime Minister reportedly
received money from Iraq to
overthrow Shishakli. Some Syrians,
supported by Saudi Arabia and Egypt,
oppose union.

B. New opportunities for radical socialists, Communists and Moslem Brotherhood.

1. Parties' weakness may give leftist Akram Hawrani significant role.

Alleged Hawrani partisan is one of revolt leaders, Capt. Hamdun.

2. Brotherhood and Communists inspired some disturbances; latter tried seize radio Damascus.

C. Army will be strongly tempted re-enter scene; did so in three 1949 coups; followed by Shishakli fully taking over in 1951. Struggle for power now on in army.

III. Implications for US

Coalition government unable move forward on any issue significant to US.

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SYRIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

I. National Front

Prominent in independence movement against French prior 1945; wanted republican Syria in power when army took over in 1949.

A. Leaders: Shukri Quwatli, Jamil Mardam, Hashem al Atassi.

B. Members in cabinet: Asali (prime minister), Muhammad Sulayman al Ahmad, Fakhir Kayyali, Afif Sulh.

II. Populist Party

Formed in 1948 in opposition to Quwatli's hold on Nationalists. Largest and most important party, closest to Western type party. Promotes secular, representative democracy, Arab nationalism.

A. Cabinet members: Ma'ruf Dawlibi, Faydi al Atassi.

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III. Arab Socialist Party

Extreme leftist and anti-Western group led by Akram Hawrani. Merged in December 1952 with extremist Arab Resurrection Party.

IV. Syrian Social National Party

Small well-organized group, with branch in Lebanon, aims at re-establishing enlarged Syria existent under Ottoman Empire -- Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, former Palestine and Iraq.

A. Shishakli formerly member.

V. Arab Liberation Movement

Organized by Shishakli in 1952. Can be assumed to be inoperative.

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